

Napoli 'never meant to offend or mock' Osimhen

BBC – Napoli said they “never meant to offend or mock” Victor Osimhen in a social media post but stopped short of publicly apologising to him. The club shared a video on their TikTok account of Nigeria’s Osimhen missing a penalty, dubbed with a high-pitched voice saying “gimme penalty please”. The 24-year-old’s agent has threatened legal action against the club. A Napoli statement said it was “never the club’s intent to offend Victor” should he “have perceived it that way”.



Napoli striker Victor Osimhen reacts after missing a penalty during a goalless draw against Bologna in Serie A in Bologna, Italy, on September 24, 2023. ● SSC NAPOLI

The social media post has since been deleted. “So as to avoid the topic being manipulated in any way, Napoli points out that it never meant to offend or mock Victor Osimhen, who is a technical asset of the club,” a statement on the club’s website read. “Proof of this is the fact that the club firmly rejected all the offers it received for the attacker’s transfer abroad.”

Napoli boss Rudi Garcia said Osimhen is “invested 100%” in the Serie A club after he scored in a 4-1 win over Udinese on Wednesday – the first game since the incident. Osimhen scored his side’s second goal in a comfortable win but made no attempt to celebrate before he was mobbed by his team-mates.

Nigeria international Osimhen joined Napoli for a club-record 81.3m euros (£70m) in the summer of 2020 and he was integral to helping them win a first Serie A title in 33 years last season, scoring 26 goals in 32 league appearances.

“I can assure you that Victor loves this jersey,” Garcia said. “He is invested 100% in our project. “I have a very good relationship with Victor. I am happy for him because he scored tonight. After the match in Bologna, we were all frustrated, angry, Victor in particular, because he missed the penalty.

“On the sporting aspect and on other levels, especially on TikTok, there have been a lot of things to manage in recent days.”

Hangzhou Asian Games: Olfati wins historic silver in artistic gymnastics

Sports Desk

Iran’s Mahdi Olfati won a historic silver on the sixth day of the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, China – a first-ever artistic gymnastics medal for the country in the history of the event.

Representing Iran in the men’s vault competition, Olfati scored 14.783 to finish second to Japanese Wataru Tanigawa – a silver winner in Tokyo Olympics – who tallied 15.016 for the ultimate prize. Aimy Muhammad Sharul of Malaysia took the bronze with 14.466. “I’m thrilled to win this silver after years of Iranians’ unfortunate failure in the Asian Games,” Olfati said.

Abed Haqdadi, the chairman of the Iranian Gymnastics Federation, was full of praise for Olfati, saying: “No one thought he would win a medal in a contest that featured some world-class athletes from Japan and South Korea.” Reigning Olympic champion Shin Jea-hwan missed out on the podium on Friday as a 14.149 score saw the South Korean settle for a fourth-place finish. “I’m sure this medal is just the beginning of a successful run for Iran in the future world and Olympic events,” added Haqdadi.

Table tennis

Elsewhere in the Games on Friday, Alamian brothers, Nima and Noshad, rallied from two games down to beat the Chinese Taipei duo Huang Yan-Cheng and Liao Cheng-Ting 3-2 (7-11, 8-11, 11-6, 11-9, 11-4) for a place in the men’s doubles quarterfinals.

“It was truly a stressful contest. We didn’t know much about the opponents beforehand, but we had a



Iran’s Mahdi Olfati is seen in action in the men’s vault event of the artistic gymnastics competitions at the Hangzhou Asian Games in China on September 29, 2023. ● hangzhou2022.cn

change of tactics after the first two games and found our way back into the match,” Iranian coach Jamil Lotfollah Nasabi said afterwards.

Nima Alamian said the pivotal moment of the match came in the fourth game.

“When it was tied at 9-9, I told my

brother: ‘Let’s hit risky servers,’ and thank God the risk paid off,” said the Iranian, who will be looking to secure a second medal in

the Games in today’s last-eight encounter against Japanese duo Taisei Matsushita and Mizuki Oikawa. It has already been a memorable campaign for Alamian brothers, who were part of the Iranian trio, alongside Mirhossein Hodaie, that beat Tokyo Olympic bronze medalist Japan before falling to South Korea in the semifinals to win the team bronze – Iran’s first table tennis medal in the Asian Games in 65 years.

Wushu glory

Friday’s results came after Iran capped off an impressive wushu campaign in Hangzhou with seven medals – including double men’s sanda golds for Afshin Salimi and Yousef Sabri – on the preceding night.

Salimi defeated Indonesian Samuel Marbun in the 65kg final, while Sabri came out on top against Macau’s Cai Feilong for the 75kg gold. This year’s event would probably be one to forget for five-time world champion Mohsen Mohammad-seifi as the Iranian sensation, who was after a fourth successive gold in the Asian Games, suffered a final defeat against the host’s He Feng and took the 70kg silver.

Shoja Panahi also came short against a Chinese opponent in Wang Xuetao and settled for the 60kg silver.

There were further glories for Mansourian sisters in the women’s draw, with Elaheh taking the 52kg silver – after a final setback against Chinese Li Yueyao – while five-time world champion Shahrbanoo finished on the third podium of the 60kg class.

Zahra Kiani had bagged a women’s talou silver in the jianshu/qiangshu contest on Wednesday.

Barca under investigation for suspected bribery in refereeing case

REUTERS – Spanish soccer club Barcelona are under investigation for suspected “active bribery” as part of a probe into suspected corruption spanning two decades at the refereeing committee, according to a court document seen by Reuters on Thursday.

Police also searched the offices of the Spanish refereeing committee (CTA) inside the football federation (RFEF) headquarters in Madrid on Thursday, the Barcelona court said, as part of the ongoing inquiry into “possible systemic corruption” within the CTA.

Spanish football and the RFEF in particular are going through a moment of reckoning amid allegations of sexual abuse against former RFEF chief Luis Rubiales.

Rubiales kissed World Cup winner Jenni Hermoso on the lips on Aug. 20, setting off a furore that largely overshadowed both the women’s team triumph in Sydney and the refereeing scandal. Rubiales has since quit. The refereeing investigation has now been widened to include Barcelona as a suspect. Investigating judge Joaquin Aguirre



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Lopez said earlier in September the club may have benefited from graft.

In March, prosecutors filed a complaint over alleged payments of more than 7.3 million euros (\$7.8 million) over 17 years to firms owned by Jose Maria Enriquez Negreira, who was vice-president of the RFEF’s refereeing committee from 1993 to 2018.

Reuters has been unable to reach Negreira. RFEF was not immediately available for comment.

A Barcelona source told Reuters the club will not issue an official statement, adding its criminal lawyers “had already contemplated this hypothesis and ... have been preparing for it from day one, working on all aspects related to this case”.

La Liga champions Barcelona have denied any wrongdoing, saying in a statement in February that the club had paid an external consultant who supplied it with “technical reports related to professional refereeing”,

which it said was a common practice among professional football clubs.

Barcelona’s arch-rivals Real Madrid had joined the prosecution in the lawsuit as a damaged party.

According to judge Aguirre, Negreira was responsible for ranking and evaluating the referees. However, no evidence has been found so far of Negreira paying referees to influence match results, Aguirre said in early September.

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